



## MAYOR GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA

City of Northampton  
Office of the Mayor

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### **Mayor Signs Option to Purchase Former First Baptist Church Building for Community Resilience Hub**

NORTHAMPTON - Today, Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra announced that she has executed an option to purchase the former First Baptist Church building located at 298 Main Street for potential reuse as the Community Resilience Hub. For several years, the City of Northampton and its partner, Community Action Pioneer Valley (CAPV) have been actively seeking a location for this critical community space.

“I am proud to announce a giant leap forward toward realizing a Community Resilience Hub in Northampton. The search for a home for these critical services has been exhaustive, but I believe this building has been worth the wait,” shared Mayor Sciarra, “We will start due diligence immediately. We hope to convert this long-vacant space into Northampton’s Resilience Hub as quickly as possible. I am profoundly excited to repurpose this historically significant building in service for the people of Northampton as a day center with programming and services for vulnerable residents, a community space, and a center for emergency response during times of crisis.”

The idea for a Community Resilience Hub began in 2019 as a key recommendation from the report [\*“A Downtown Northampton for Everyone: Residents, Visitors, Merchants, and People At-Risk.”\*](#) Planning was accelerated during the early spring of 2020 as the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the profound need for this critical resource. The Mayor’s Office and the Office of Planning Sustainability convened meetings with architects, local and regional stakeholders, and service providers. Community Action Pioneer Valley, as the city’s social service partner, enthusiastically committed to be the lead operational partner for the Hub and collaborate on support services it will ultimately provide. Thus began work to secure funding sources and a location.

“I salute the city for identifying a location for the Resilience Hub. Now we need to get to work bringing the people and organizations together to build what goes inside,” said Clare Higgins, Executive Director of CAPV. “With this building, we can all move forward to realize the dream of truly coordinated services that help people in this beautiful place.”

The location was chosen after an extensive real estate search and advertising for proposals for qualifying space. This executed option begins the due diligence phase. As with any large historic building with complex systems, there is no guarantee that the building will prove to be sufficient for the needs of a potential Community Resilience Hub, but the city is optimistic.

The First Baptist Church has approximately 14,500 square feet of space and is located between Forbes Library and downtown, near the intersection of Main and West Streets. It was built in 1904 by the First Baptist Church of Northampton to replace a church that had been destroyed by fire in 1863. In 1988, the First Baptist Church congregation merged with the First Congregational Church to create First Churches of Northampton. The building has been vacant since 1993, when it was purchased by developer and Iron Horse Entertainment Group owner Eric Suher with the intention of turning it into a music venue and catering facility.



As previously noted, the city has designated \$1,610,000 in cannabis mitigation funds, along with \$506,872 from two types of Community Development Block Grant funds, a \$200,000 gift from Smith College, and \$53,268 in other donations. Mayor Sciarra will seek approval from the City Council for the balance of funds from American Rescue Plan Act loss revenue funds transferred to the city's General Fund. The city has now secured full funding for due diligence, purchase, and carrying costs.

For more information, please visit the city's [Community Resilience Hub](#) page, or contact the Mayor's Office at 413-587-1249 or [mayor@northamptonma.gov](mailto:mayor@northamptonma.gov).

Tax-deductible contributions to help coordinate the programming and improvements needed before the building can be used as a Community Resilience Hub can be sent to City of Northampton, % Planning & Sustainability, 210 Main St, Northampton, MA 01060, or online [here](#).